Close Reading Workshop – Preparation for the January Prelim

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| Paper/ Question | Question Type | Other Similar Questions | Rate yourself |
| 2007, Q4 |  |  |  |
| 2008, Q2 |  |  |  |
| 2008, Q4 |  |  |  |
| 2009, Q9 |  |  |  |
| 2011, Q8 |  |  |  |
| 2010, Q3 |  |  |  |
| 2010, Q13 |  |  |  |

Example 1

## Paper: 2007 Question: 4

There is a stock response to my love affair with libraries: that I am being too

nostalgic. That the multi-tasking, MTV generation can access information from a

computer, get cheap books from the supermarket and still chatter to each

other at a thousand decibels. Who needs old-fashioned library buildings? And

why should councils subsidise what Google will provide for free?

There is some proof for this line of argument. The number of people in Scotland

using their local public library falls every year, with just under a quarter of Scots

now borrowing books (admittedly, that was 34 million books). As a result, local

authorities have reduced their funding for new books by 30 per cent. Of course,

fewer new books mean fewer library users, so guaranteeing the downward spiral.

**4.** Read lines 25–34.

(*a*) Show how the writer’s language in lines 25–29 conveys his attitude to the

“MTV generation”. You should refer in your answer to such features as

sentence structure, word choice, tone . . .

(*b*) Explain the “downward spiral” (line 34) to which the writer refers.

Example 2

## Paper: 2008 Question: 2

**2.** (*a*) Show how the word choice **and** sentence structure in lines 8–14 emphasise

the strong feelings of those who feel the countryside is under threat. 4A

(*b*) Show how the writer’s use of language in lines 15–20 conveys his disapproval of the “action groups”.2A

One faction has cried constantly that the countryside is in mortal danger from

greedy developers whose only motive is profit; another has kept on roaring that

farmers are killing every wild thing in sight and threatening the very soil on which

we stand through overuse of machinery and chemicals; still another has been

continually heard ululating over a decline in the bird population, or the loss of

hedgerows, or the disappearance of marshland, or the appearance of coniferous forest.

Example 3

## Paper: 2008 Question: 4

**4.** “This view is palpably nonsensical.” (lines 32–33)

(*a*) Explain, using your own words as far as possible, what “this view” is.

Refer to lines 30–32 in your answer. 2U

(*b*) Give in your own words **one** of the writer’s reasons in lines 33–38 2U

(“. . . ideas.”) for believing that the view is “palpably nonsensical”.

(*c*) Show how the writer’s use of language in lines 38–41 reinforces his criticism of the conservationists’ ideas. 2A

The assumption is that the landscape is our living link with our history, the visible

expression of our British roots, and that if we allow it to change (“to be destroyed”,

the conservationists would say), the link is broken forever. This view is palpably

nonsensical. Our national identity is not defined by the landscape against which we

carry on our lives. There is, in fact, no single thread that can be identified as our

rural heritage or tradition. Rather there is a bewildering array of different

influences that have combined haphazardly through the centuries as successive

invaders and immigrants and, later, successive generations, have reconstructed the

landscape according to their own needs and ideas. What the conservationists seek to

preserve is simply the landscape *as it is now*, in its incarnation of the early twenty first

century. Far from affirming history, this approach actually denies it, for it would remove the continuous change without which history does not exist.

Example 4

## Paper: 2009 Question: 9

**9.** Read lines 9–24.

(*a*) Explain the “irony” referred to in line 11. 1U

(*b*) Show how the writer’s use of language in lines 13–19 conveys his

unsympathetic view of the speakers at the conference. In your answer you should refer to at least **two** features such as sentence structure, tone, word choice . . . 4A

(*c*) How effective do you find the writer’s use of imagery in lines 20–24 in

conveying the impact that flying has on the environment? 2A/E

I recently travelled to Geneva to attend the second “Aviation and Environment 10 Summit” in search of, if not answers, then at least a better indication of just how damaging flying really is to the environment. (The irony was not lost that hundreds

of people had flown from around the world to attend.)

Speaker after speaker bemoaned how the public had somehow misunderstood the

aviation industry and had come to believe that aviation is a huge and disproportionate polluter. Let’s get this in perspective, said repeated speakers: this is small fry compared with cars, factories, even homes. Why are we being singled out, they cried? Why not, they said, chase after other industries that could easily make efficiency savings instead of picking on an industry that gives so much to the world, yet is currently so economically fragile?

But even in this self-interested arena a representative from the US Federal Aviation Administration caused some sharp intakes of breath from the audience by showing an extraordinary map of current flightpaths etched over one another on the world’s surface. The only places on Earth that are not scarred by routes are blocks of air space over the central Pacific, the southern Atlantic and Antarctica.

Example 5

## Paper: 2010 Question: 3

3. Show how the writer’s use of language in lines 15–20 conveys the Victorians’

disgust at the city they had created. You should refer in your answer to such features as imagery, word choice, sentence structure . . .

4A

Having invented the modern city, 19th century Britain promptly reeled back in horror

at what it had done. To the Victorians exploring the cholera-ridden back alleys of

London’s East End, the city was a hideous tumour sucking the life out of the

countryside and creating in its place a vast polluted landscape of squalor, disease and

crime. In their eyes, the city was a place to be feared, controlled and, if possible, eliminated.

Example 6

## Paper: 2010 Question: 13

**13.** Read lines 27–35.

(*a*) What is the writer’s main criticism of the way the “politicians and the

Establishment” run Glasgow?

1U

(*b*) Show how the writer’s use of language in this paragraph creates a tone of disapproval.

2A

The politicians and the Establishment talk the language of “opportunity”, “choice”

and “diversity” for the people of the city, but do not really believe in or practise

them. They impose a set menu, rather than the choice offered “à la carte”,

confident that they know best. For all the rhetoric about new ways of working,

partnership and collaboration, there can still be a very old-fashioned top-down

approach in parts of institutional Glasgow that retains a faith that experts and

professionals must hold all the answers. There is an implicit belief that people are

poor because of low aspirations and Glaswegians are unhealthy because they won’t

Example 7

## Paper: 2011 Question: 8

**8.** Read lines 1–10.

(*a*) In what ways, according to the writer, can young people be adversely

affected by playing video games?

2U

(*b*) Show how the writer creates in these lines an impression of outrage in his condemnation of video games. 2A

It’s the snarl that gives the game away. It’s the sobbing and the shrieking and the

horrible pleading—that’s how you know your children are undergoing a sudden

narcotic withdrawal. As the strobing colours die away and the screen goes black, you

listen to the wail of protest from the offspring and you know that you have just turned

off their drug, and you know that they are, to a greater or lesser extent, addicts.

Millions of seven-to-fifteen-year olds are hooked, especially boys, and it is time

someone had the guts to stand up, cross the room and just say no to Nintendo. It is

time to garrotte the Game Boy and paralyse the PlayStation, and it is about time, as a

society, that we admitted the catastrophic effect these blasted gizmos are having on the

## literacy and the prospects of young males.